Stateless and other Tamilian plantation workers in Sri Lanka; and

(b) if so, what are the details of the talks and the outcome thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI K. R. NARAYANAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Talks were held in regard to the problems of "the stateless persons of Indian origin" in Sri Lanka and other matters pertaining to the ethnic conflict in that country. These discussions were helpful in arriving at an understanding with the Governmnet of Sri Lanka on 15th January, 86, in regard to ending the residual problem of statelessness.

Request by a member of Indian Consulate for Political asylum in Canada

495. SHRI J. P. GOYAL: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that I. S. Bindra, member in the Indian Consulate in Toronto in Canada had sought political asylum in Canada as a refugee;

(b) if so, what was the Canadian Government's response thereto; and

(c) whether the Government of India had taken up the issue with Canadian Government; if so, in what terms and what was the outcome thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI K. R. NARAYANAN): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Does not arise.

Visit of official Indian Delegation to Pakistan

496. SHRI B. SATYANARAYAN REDDY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether an official Indian delegation led by Shri Romesh Bhandari, Foreign Secretary. visited Pakistan recently for talks on various bilateral issues;

(b) if so, what are the specific issues on which the talks were held and the details of agreements, if any, reached on different issues; and

(c) to what extent the Indo-Pak relations have improved as a result thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI K. R. NARAYANAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Wide-ranging discussions were held on a number of regional and international issues as also key bilateral matters such as a comprehensive treaty of peace and friendship, non-attack of each others nuclear facilities and installations and other confidence building measures. It was agreed that a Cultural Agreement would be signed at the next Joint Commission meeting, civilian detainees who have completed their sentences would be repatriated on a reciprocal basis and a concerted attempt would be made to locate the Indian defence personnel missing since 1971.

(c) The discussions were conducive to a better understanding of each other's perceptions.

Indian steps to resolve ethnic issue in Sri Lanka

497. SHRIMATI SUDHA VIJAY JOSHI:

SHRIMATI AMARJIT KAUR:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any steps the Government of India have taken during the last three months to help resolving the ethnic issue of Tamilians in Sri Lanka; and

(b) if so, what are the details thereof and the results achieved?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI K. R. NARAYANAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) In response to the good offices offered by the Government of India the Tamil United Liberation Front came out with a set of proposals for resolution of the ethnic issue within the framework of a united Sri Lanka. Their proposals were forwarded to the Government of Sri Lanka through its High Commission in New Delhi on 11-12-85. The response of the Government of Sri Lanka was received on 31-1-86. In addition Government have held informal discussions with the Government of Sri Lanka through diplomatic channels and with the ENLF and PLOT representatives of TULF, in an effort to narrow the gap between the position of the Government of Sri Lanka and the Tamil groups. These discussions are continuing.

Fire at Siddhartha Continental Hotel

498. SHRI INDRADEEP SINHA:

SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA:

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a major fire broke out on January 24, 1986 at Siddhartha Continental Hotel in Vasant Vihar, New Delhi in which at least 37 persons including foreigner and diplocats were killed and 46 others seriously injured; and

(b) whether an inquiry. judicial or magisterial has been conducted into the causes of the fire accident, if so, with what results?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERNAL SECURITY (SHRI ARUN NEHRU): (a) Yes. 37 persons lost their lives, 5 were injured and 21 affected by inhalation of carbon monoxide gas during the fire incident at Siddhartha Hotel, New Delhi.

(b) A one man Judicial Commission has been set up to conduct an inquiry into this incident. The report is awaited.

Cancellation of the visit of foreign Secretary of Sri Lanka

499. SHRI JAGDAMBI PRASAD YADAV:

SHRI SURAJ PRASAD:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Foreign Secretary, Shri Romesh Bhandari had to cancel his visit to Sri Lanka which was purported to explore possibilities of bringing the Sri Lankan Government and the Tamil representatives to the negotiating table to resolve the ethnic problem; and

(b)if so, what are the reasons for cancellation of the visit?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI K. R. NARAYANAN): (a) The Foreign Secretary Shri Romesh Bhandari was schedule to visit Sri Lanka for discussions with Sri Lankan leaders in the continuing attempt to narrow the gap between the positions of the Sri Lanka Government and the Tamil groups in regard to a solution to the ethnic problem. The Foreign Secretary had to postpone his visit.

(b) In the light of developments at the time Government felt that a visit by the Foreign Secretary would not be advisable. Hence the visit was postponed.

Incidence of cancer, sterility and genetic disorders in the workers of Indian rare earths Ltd.

500. SHRI VIRENDRA VERMA:

SHRI RAM NARESH KUSHWAHA:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the incidence of cancer and sterility among the workers and of genetic disorders among their off springs is assuming alarming proportions in the Indian Rare Earths Ltd., an undertaking under the Department of Atomic Energy; and